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SUBJECT: ITALIAN VIEWS ON MAY 23 GAERC AGENDA

REF: STATE 90085

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Tom Countryman. Reason: 1.
4 (b)(d)

ESDP

11. (C) MFA Director for EU CFSP told Poloff that the GAERC would begin with a Monday morning EU defense ministers meeting to discuss an ESDP progress report. He described the draft he had seen as "non-controversial," with a dozen or so chapters devoted to assessments of rapid response capabilities, battlegroup creation, and SOFAs for EU force deployment. Italy was participating actively in the portion devoted to evaluation of operation Althea (Bosnia), particularly language to incorporate carabinieri/gendarmes into a unified military chain of command. Mattiolo said that neither Defense Ministers nor Foreign Ministers had discussion of Berlin-plus or NATO interoperability on their agendas.

Balkans

12. (C) Ministers will discuss utilizing the Stabilization and Association Agreement as a means to encourage reform and progress Bosnia. Mattiolo confirmed that the conclusions would include conditional language underlining that Bosnia's further integration with transatlantic institutions is dependent on enhanced ICTY cooperation.

Sudan

13. (C) Although not an EU mission, MOD Martino will confirm that Italy is prepared to deploy 220 troops to the UN flagged "Operation Nile" in Sudan. The GAERC conclusions will call for enhanced EU/NATO/AU coordination and will identify specific areas for "burden sharing." Ministers will note the importance of the EU being more "forward leaning" regarding financial assistance to the AU; specifically, conclusions will call for finalizing the nature and amounts of contributions by the end of May.

China Arms Embargo

14. (C) According to Mattiolo neither Defense nor Foreign Ministers have the embargo on their agendas. Referring to our points (reftel) Mattiolo cautioned against giving too much weight to Luxembourg Foreign Minister Asselborn's statement that a lift of the embargo is still possible before the end of the Luxembourg presidency. Mattiolo claimed that momentum among member states was moving away from, rather than towards, lifting any time soon.

SEMBLER

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